

March 1, 2009

## “GOD’S ‘PROOFS’ THAT HE LOVES US”

Dear Friends & Family,

As I related to you in an email last year, I began reading through the Bible in 2007, a discipline I had not undertaken since Bible school days (obligatory!) over 30 years ago. Again, my hope is to continue to do so for the rest of my life. It is also a deep regret that I did not do so for the past three decades. Rather, I focused on various books & passages from the Word of God throughout those many years. Last week, I finished the Old Testament, which, of course, ends with the prophet Malachi. As with the Queen of Sheba being rendered “breathless” at the sight of Solomon’s wisdom & glory, which precipitated in me both a sermon & Time Machine drama, so, another portion of Sacred Scripture has once again stopped me in my tracks & caused me to ponder, meditate, wonder, & adore. **“PLEASE—BE CROSS WITH ME.”**

A common phenomenon among Christians, & particularly younger ones, is the mistake of looking for reassurances of God’s love for you in life’s circumstances. This often carries into more mature Christians’ lives too! If you sense His blessings—material, emotional, & spiritual upon you, you gather from such “evidences” that He is pleased with you at that time. In times of adversity, however, both your flesh & the devil are quick to assert & interpret such circumstances as those confirming that the Lord is now angry with you, & is against you. Like little children, in our desperate need for love, comfort, & security, we run to try & “do things” to again obtain our Father’s acceptance. Martin Luther once said that the greatest tendency in man is to justify himself. However, there can be no greater proof of our Father’s acceptance & love (justice & holiness) than the crucifixion of His Beloved Son in His people’s place. This is to be first & foremost our “rapid response” to feelings of divine rejection, which for me anyway, often occur! We should rapidly run to Jesus’ death on the cross as our response to those, O, so deep-seated feelings of rejection & condemnation that all of us feel, especially after we’ve sinned! Often, however, we run to try & do more “works”, a.k.a., praying more, reading our Bibles more, endeavoring to stop worldly activities, etc. All of these are both noble & beneficial, unless they are done with a motive to achieve God’s acceptance! His standard of acceptance for us is absolute perfection at all times. When we realize this, if we understand it aright, a blanket of peace should come down upon our troubled souls, as it is so painfully clear that it is a standard we cannot obtain, & must be done by Someone Else in our place! And hence, that is exactly what Jesus did! He is our “Surety”, i.e., One Who fulfills all of God’s requirements & obligations on our behalf! O, such wondrous peace & adoration this truth produces!

### “pro- {Divine}-Choice”

I say all of the above, to say this: the cross, & Jesus’ wondrous & perfect work upon it for His people’s sake, is worthless to us unless we’re made partakers of it! This comes to the 2<sup>nd</sup> (?) most effective & comforting proof of God’s love for us, & it comes through the prophet Malachi, chapter one, in the first three verses. The Lord says to His people Israel through him, “I have loved you”. His people’s response is, “How have You loved us?”. What they mean is, “In what way? In what manner? HOW have You shown & proven that You have loved us?”. The Lord’s answer is monumental, mysterious, unfathomable, & staggering! And yet, understanding the Lord’s response to Israel’s doubts of the proof of His love is so very necessary & critical to understanding the magnitude of divine grace lavished on the people of God! “Was not Esau, Jacob’s *brother*?” A closer relationship there cannot be, i.e., not only coming from the same womb, but having been conceived & developed in the same womb at the same time! I’ve pondered & wished over the years that my siblings & I, as well as our own three children, would grasp that for all of eternity, of the billions of souls who would have existed since Adam until the last human soul is conceived, that only my siblings & I will ever come from my mother’s womb, all having our “origins” in the same, dark,

sacred place! It is a sanctity that will be shared by no one else—ever; the same with our three children— &, of course, for all siblings throughout human history. Now, reverently & fearfully observe what the Sovereign Lord of all creation, of all flesh does, & thereby says: “Yet, I have loved Jacob; but, I have hated Esau”. Paul says in Romans 9:11 (&, by the way, this text is God’s “9/11”!) that the Lord did so *before* either of the twins had done anything, either good or evil! In order to understand the profundity of what is being asserted here, one MUST have a solid, firm, understanding of the evil, human condition. ALL, equally, deserve God’s wrath via the imputation of Adam’s sin to the entire race (Rom.5:12; Eph.2:1-3)—none less than another. God answers Israel’s doubt & complaint re: proof of His love for them, by declaring to them that they were HIS choice, His free, sovereign, unconditional choice—His choice, above all other nations, whom, in time, Israel became MORE wicked than (II Kgs.21:9)! This was despite their abundant provision of the divine revelation above all the other nations (Rom.9:4,5). God foreknew this, & STILL chose to choose them!

### **“God Loves, Excels, & Thrives in ‘Worst Case Scenarios!’”**

Why? As with all He does, He *always* goes the “most-glory route” in His decisions. He chose that nation above all others that would prove to be THE WORST! Why? It provided opportunity for Him to show to all how incredibly merciful, long-suffering, patient, & forgiving He is—the worse, the better, for the revealing of His glorious perfections! And it has & shall always be that way! Paul was the “chief of sinners”, vehemently opposing Jesus Christ & His gospel. And yet, he is the one the Father chose to *proclaim* that gospel! Why? It *showed more of God’s glorious mercy* than if He had chosen someone “less defiant & more compliant”! It is the same with us, Beloved. In speaking of God’s free, sovereign & merciful choice of His people, Paul says God deliberately chose the foolish, the weak, the base, & the despised things of this world. Why? So that no man can boast (of himself & his efforts) in His presence (I Cor.1:26-31). God’s action before He chose His people was one of His “setting His affection upon”. Just typing these words melts my heart like wax before the flame. “I can’t take it in, Father. Please help me to ‘absorb You’. I’m so, so, so very evil Lord, even after all You have done for me. I reek with self, vanity, pride, hypocrisy...O Father, the list goes on & on...& yet, You say, O Father, that You set Your affection upon me, as You did with Israel, for the sake of Someone Else”. For Israel, God set His loving affection upon them & chose them above other nations *for the sake of* “the fathers”, i.e., Israel’s patriarchs (Dt.10:15). For His people in the New Covenant, Father chose them before the foundation of the world (Eph.1:4) “*in Christ*”, or, for the sake of Christ. Eph.1:5 says that Father was “happy to do so”! (my paraphrase). Do you notice that absolutely no reason is found nor given for God’s choice of us *in us*? **“FOR HIS OWN GLORY”** That precious text, Eph.1:4, cited above, says He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world *to be* holy. That is, with the end of us becoming holy; otherwise, there is nothing good at all in us (Rom. 7:18). That is why the Holy Spirit through Paul in Rom.9:23 refers to Christians as vessels of “*mercy*”. “Michael, you mean me becoming a Christian was ultimately God’s idea, & not mine?!”. Exactly. Beloved, this is our battleaxe, after the cross, in the evil days of darkness, despair, fear, condemnation, accusation, & attack. The cross avails us nothing, if Father does not enable us (Jn.6:65) & draw us (Jn.6:44) to come to it, & the One Who hung upon it. Jesus was declaring in those verses that no one wants to, nor is able to, come to Him & His cross apart from the Father’s gracious choice, with His “resultant process” of enabling & drawing His Chosen People to come. “So Michael, are you saying you’re *pro-choice*, divinely speaking?”. Yes. We love Him, because He first loved us (I Jn.4:19); we bless Him, because He first blessed us (Eph.1:3); & we chose Him because He first chose us (Eph.1:4). Remember, any aspect of our becoming God’s children which ultimately originates with us, ultimately originates—*with us*! And Jesus said, “that which is born (or originated) of flesh, is *flesh*!” (Jn.3:6). Re: a marriage, it’s customary for the groom to

pick & propose to his bride, & not vice versa. I asked Kim to be my wife; she didn't propose to me. (To be honest, she did ask me out first for her high school's "Sadie Hawkins" dance, & I'm so very glad she did!) Remember what Jesus, our Bridegroom To Be said? "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you". And this is proper, & I believe the biblical pattern, except that, in Scripture, it was Jesus' Father Who "arranged" His marriage, & picked or chose His Bride (to be) for Him from the mass of fallen humanity (the "same lump"; Rom.9:21) who did not seek nor want Him (Rom.3:11) by nature (Eph.2:3) before the foundation of the world (Eph.1:4) & entered them into His divine registry, a.k.a., The Lamb's Book of Life, way back then! (Rev.13:8; 17:8).

### **"IT'S WORSHIP HE'S AFTER"**

This precious, pregnant, "nuclear", "fall on the floor" truth in Scripture, which is all throughout Scripture, has been one of the most vehemently opposed by proud, stubborn, self-crediting human nature; & yet, it stands, & is unequaled, next to the crucifixion of the Son of God in His Church's place, in producing & evoking holy fear, awe, brokenness, gratitude, inexpressible love & service to our Sovereign Lord. Why? Because our God picking us to be His Own, as He did Israel, is what enables us to partake of the wondrous love that He so extravagantly demonstrated on the cross of Calvary! This precious truth causes deep-seated worship in God's people like few others! May we hear it rung throughout this land in every pulpit: "We are His *CHOSEN* people!"

Thank you so very much, for reading this & for enabling us to continue to serve the Lord in the manner in which He has caused & gifted us at this season of our lives.

Sincerely,

## **Michael & Kim**

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[Please make all tax-deductible gifts payable to: **Elim Fellowship**, 1703 Dalton Rd, Lima, NY 14485. Thanks!]  
[Michael is an ordained Elim Fellowship itinerant home missionary, endorsed by his local church. He makes his living & supports his family & ministry by preaching God's Word & through faith in the Lord & His provision through His people.]

### **Ministry/events for MARCH & those not listed in last month's newsletter:**

**Feb. 7,8: Trinity U.C.C. "Pier" Youth Group Retreat, Camp Mensch Mill, PA**

**Feb.18: former camper, kids' church member's father's funeral, Pike Creek, DE**

**Feb. 18: Immanuel Church, Wilmington, DE: Tabernacle of David worship leader**

**Feb. 19: EF area pastors' mtg.//Come Alive Church, Medford, NJ: children's ministry consult. Mtg.  
Immanuel Church Via Dolorosa Room Captains' mtg. (p.m.)**

**Feb. 21: 1<sup>st</sup> Pres. Church, Reading, PA: "500<sup>th</sup> Anniv. Of John Calvin's Birth" mini-conference:attendee**

**Feb. 22:Immanuel Church, Wilmington, DE: worship team drummer; pre-sermon skit for Pastor**

***N.B.: All of the month of March & half of April will be spent re: preparing for, setting up, tearing down & actual performance of our own local church's biggest event of the year, "Via Dolorosa".***

**Mar. 1: Immanuel Church's Via Dolorosa Room Captains' planning mtg.**

**Mar. 3: Hopewell Christian Fellowship, Elverson, PA: camp board mtg.//network pastors' mtg.**

**Mar. 7: Hopewell Network Camp staff annual reunion banquet, Tel Hai Camp, Honey Brook, PA**

**Mar.13: annual trip to our Christian tax-consultant, Lebanon, PA**

**NEWS&NEEDS&Recent READs: Kim & I are still really trying to sell our Temperpedic bed, so that we can buy a Select Comfort, which is better for my back.**

**I've done recent reading in Tabletalk magazines, edited by R.C. Sproul, Fundamentalism & The Word of God, by J.I. Packer; The Collected Sayings of John Murray, Vol.IV; The History Of The Christian Church, by Philip Schaff**